

Lithuania demands return of deserters

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R. (AP) — Lithuania's leaders on Tuesday angrily accused Moscow of "inexcusable aggression" and of kidnapping its citizens after Soviet troops stormed two hospitals in a harsh roundup of army deserters.

Later, the Kremlin ordered all foreigners to leave the republic, which declared independence March 11. Soviet troops occupied a fifth Communist Party building in Vilnius, the capital.

Washington and other foreign governments urged restraint but avoided attacking Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev, who faces growing independence movements in several republics as he tries to

institute reform.

The Bush administration, in declining to denounce Moscow, said it did not want to "inflame the situation."

Soviet officials defended their actions and condemned the Lithuanians' aspirations as dangerous.

"Even Vice President Quayle admitted the other day there should be some discipline in the army," Sergei Chetverikov, minister-counselor at the Soviet Embassy, said at a news conference in Washington.

Quayle said Saturday the Soviets should not threaten Lithuania but

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added that "if the Soviet Union is applying disciplinary measures to people in their own military, that's a different situation."

In a furious letter to Gorbachev, Lithuania's president, Vytautas Landsbergis, and prime minister, Kazimera Prunskiene, said their government "demands the return of its kidnapped citizens." They also urged negotiations with Moscow "in neutral territory."

Both Landsbergis and Prunskiene said Gorbachev had refused their calls.

Soviet soldiers stormed two hospitals before dawn Tuesday and seized 23 Lithuanian deserters who had sought refuge, the official Tass news agency said. Lithuanian television said two genuine mental patients were accidentally seized but that the soldiers let them go later.

Witnesses said some deserters were beaten as they were taken from a run-down psychiatric

hospital in Vilnius. A trail of blood led down the steps and out the front door of the hospital.

Gorbachev has called Lithuania's independence declaration invalid and last week ordered Lithuanians to turn in their weapons and signing up with a volunteer militia.

He had promised not to use force unless lives were endangered in the Baltic republic, which the Soviet Union forcibly annexed along with Latvia and Estonia in 1940. But military authorities had warned Lithuania they would use force to capture deserters if the men had

not returned voluntarily by last Saturday.

In addition to storming the hospitals, Soviet troops Tuesday took over the Communist Party headquarters in the center of Vilnius. It was the fifth party building Soviet forces have seized in the republic since the weekend.

There was little response in Moscow to the turmoil. Gorbachev spoke for several minutes on Soviet TV Tuesday evening about the first meeting of his new Presidential Council, an advisory body. He never mentioned Lithuania.